

## NOTE.

THE publication of the following discourses may be regarded as an experiment, on part of the author, to determine whether by *brain* or *brawn* he may best supplement the meagre salary of a Home Missionary. The latter method he has tried, perhaps even longer than modesty required; and he ventures to hope that the former may prove more for his own comfort, if not for the public good.

Let it not be inferred, however, that the author intends to inflict upon the public a *volume of sermons*, in case this essay shall be successful; but simply that he wishes to ascertain by experiment whether he may effectively use the press as an ally, in his humble endeavors to do the work of an Evangelist and fulfil the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus.

The first of these sermons—on Human Brotherhood—was written at the Seminary; and though the Professor before whom it was read for criticism may be grieved to find a rhetorical blemish which he pointed out, it is hoped that many a reader will find in the sermon a *seed thought* which shall germinate and bear fruit—*good fruit*, which shall illustrate the wide difference between the *religion of philanthropy* and the *philanthropy of religion*.

The second sermon—on the Curse of Meroz—was written in November, 1863, and may seem to be uncalled for at the present time. But the thoughtful reader will not fail to perceive that the things which were then spoken of the civil war, and the duty of citizens in view of it, may (by the "Rule of Three") be easily referred to that greater conflict which is now going on—which, even in respect to the future welfare of our country, is far more dangerous than that between the Union and rebel armies.

The last of the three sermons—that on Christian Contentment,—was written in the Autumn of 1865, with the intention of preparing an essay on the same subject, to compete for the New-Year's prize offered by the New York *Observer*. But a protracted absence from home, and then the cares of a missionary field, left the author no time for essay writing; so he endeavored to follow his own teaching, and seek that higher "prize" which, not one only, but *all* the competitors may so *run that they may obtain*.

## SERMON I.

# HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

*“And hath made of one blood all nations of men.”—ACTS 17-26.*

IN the discourse from which these words are taken Paul is reproofing the idolatry of the Athenians. God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things. God must not be likened to statues of gold or silver or stone; for He made the world and all things in it; and as even the heathen poet had said, “we are also His offspring.”

But while the apostle's main object is to set forth the true relations of man to God, he incidentally sets forth the relation of men to each other. When declaring that God made all nations of men, he takes occasion to say that He made them all of *one blood*. This truth, as well as the other, the Greeks had denied; and their proud contempt for the *barbarians* received a keen rebuke in these words of the apostle.

But the denial, and especially the *neglect*, of this truth is by no means peculiar to the ancient Greeks. It is one of the natural fruits, and one of the most obvious proofs of that depravity of heart which is universal as our race. The same self-will that casts off the fear of God, casts off also the love of man. As it practically denies the authority of God, the Creator and Father of all; so it practically denies the claims of man, who is our equal and fellow.

But deny it as we may, neglect it as we do, the truth remains that all men *are* of one blood. We are all of one family, and every man is a brother. Accordingly we read (Heb. 2d,) that the Captain of our salvation, in order to redeem those who were partakers of flesh and blood, Himself also took part of the same. “For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; [i. e. of *one blood*, of the same *nature*;] for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Since, then, it is true that all men are of one blood, let us inquire *what will be the effect upon our own minds of a practical acknowledgment of this truth?*

I. It will make us thoughtful. How tender is the tie of kindred

blood! Near relatives who have never met, and who may not expect to meet this side the river, are still dear to each other. Who has not both observed and experienced this, in his own history? Who has not felt towards unseen relatives that outgoing of soul which affords so expressive a commentary on those words of the apostle "whom having not seen ye love!"

It now we enlarge the circle of those whom we call *kindred* till it embrace the whole family of man; if our minds become thoroughly and practically convinced of the truth that all men *are* of one family, of one blood; it will be to us a constant monitor, continually suggestive of serious reflection. Every man we meet is a *brother*! every man we read or hear of is a *brother*! In whatever condition, with whatever character; princes or slaves, polished or uncouth; in prosperity, honor and virtue, or in poverty, disgrace and crime; whenever and wherever we find *men*, there are our brethren; all these are of one blood with ourselves. Now if this truth dwell in our minds as a practical belief, and not a mere theoretic opinion, it cannot fail to make us thoughtful. Suppose, for example, we are reading of the Feejee Islands, where are the habitations of cruelty,—where men eat the flesh of their enemies, and even of their friends; or we are listening to some adventurer in search of gold as he describes the natives of Australia whose manner of life would scarce distinguish them from brutes; when we read or hear such things, the thought will arise—these are my brethren; we have all one Father; who has made me to differ from them? And then those words of the apostle, "if thou didst *receive* it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" and that command of our Savior, "*Freely ye have received, freely give.*"—But we may find illustrations nearer home. We take a seat in a rail car, with some scores of persons of all ages and conditions. These are all brethren; brought together for an hour,—many of them having never met before, and being never to meet again till the resurrection. Each has his separate path in life, but here for once they all meet. Who can tell the joys and sorrows that await each one! Who can read the thoughts that now fill the mind of each? Here, it may be, is a mourner, whom some word of thine might cheer. Here, a soul beginning to feel the burden of sin, whom a word fitly spoken may point to the Lamb of God.

Here is a brother or a sister entrusted to thy keeping for an hour; *think* of thy duty.

We walk the streets of the busy city. The crowds we meet are children of one family, of which family are we. Various in condition, in character and pursuit, yet all are of one blood. Here is a man of coarse manners and repulsive habits; yet he is a *man*. He is hard, indeed, as we all are by nature, but grace can soften his heart and cause him to weep like a little child. He is capable of becoming a fit companion for angels; and who knows but, through thy prayer, he may become so!

Yonder behold what should have been a *woman*, though she might disdain to be called by that honorable name. She is proud of her wealth, it may be of beauty, certainly of her apparel; and you begin to quote the words of Isaiah concerning the tinkling ornaments, or some proverb of Solomon concerning a fair woman without discretion. But despise her not; she is thy sister. She *has* an immortal soul, though she seems to have forgotten it; and shall not her thoughtlessness make us the more thoughtful?

Let us visit the school-room. There sits a younger brother of ours; a pleasant child, looking as innocent as any in the school. Can you believe that ere twice ten years have passed that boy will be a murderer? Yet *it may be so*, for it has already been. And can we be thoughtless when one of our kindred is in danger of such an end? Turn, again, to the social gathering, where we meet to enjoy for an evening the pleasures of society. There are things we do not like; and we criticise others. But the truth of our text comes to mind, and we begin to criticise ourselves. We reflect that all these are of one blood—we are all brethren: sprung from a common origin, and looking forward to a common destiny. Those very things which before awakened in us feelings which we should not like to own, now suggest nobler thoughts, occasion far different feelings; and we leave the company better than we came.

We come together to the house of God. Have we no interest, save that of curiosity, in those who assemble with us? We are all of *one blood*. Is it a matter of indifference to us whether that brother or that sister shall hear the word of life and be saved, or neglect it and perish forever? What though we be personally unacquainted—though never a word has passed between us and them, and may not during our earthly pilgrimage? This very thought may awaken trains of reflection which shall be not altogether unprofitable and vain. Are all these,



whom I call *strangers*, in reality my own *kindred*? I wonder if we shall all meet in the temple above! What if my inattention,—what if some careless look of mine should be the occasion of stumbling to any one of these! What if through *my* fault a brother should fail of that rest! And when such things are *possible*, will not the truth of our text continually force itself upon us, and compel us to serious reflection?

But the practical recognition of this truth will not only make us thoughtful, by giving us an *interest* in all men:—

II. It will give us a sympathizing spirit. Our interest will be that of *sympathy*. We shall rejoice in the prosperity of any and every man, and in proportion to the kind and degree of that prosperity. In a well ordered family there is such a community of feeling that when one member rejoices all rejoice together. If one is prospered in his estate, or his reputation; still more if he be distinguished for intellectual gifts and moral excellence, there is a glow of generous delight in the hearts of all the rest. There is an unselfish joy that their brother is successful in his business, that he is honored by others, or—whether he receives it or not—that he is *worthy* of esteem and love. So it should be in the family of mankind; and so it will be if we practically acknowledge that all are brethren. Every feeling of envy and jealousy would be banished from our minds. It will be no cause of pain to us that a brother has risen higher than we. Instead of exciting enmity and unholy emulation, it will rather provoke to *love* and to *good works*. We shall feel grateful that one of *our blood* is so great or so good, and be stimulated to a *generous* and a *holy* emulation, that we may not dishonor illustrious kindred.

The same principle that leads us to rejoice in the success of others, will cause us to grieve at their failure. Regarding every man as a brother, we shall be tenderly alive to all that is adverse to his welfare. We shall have no heart to *laugh* at his misfortunes, his follies or his crimes. That is not a *fraternal* spirit which rejoices at the fall of another, that one's self may be exalted; or that can view with indifference the distress of another, because one's self is not touched. And when we look abroad upon the world and see what ignorance, degradation and wickedness prevail; when we see how many fail of obtaining the good they seek; how vast a majority fail even of seeking the good they ought to aim at, will not our hearts be touched with sympathy

if we regard all men as our brethren? Sickness and poverty, hunger, and cold, and nakedness, are no strangers in this world of ours. Vice and crime everywhere abound. How does a brother's eye flash with indignation if the voice of slander be but whispered against his sister! And can we be unmoved to learn that in a single city of this land there are thousands whom it were no slander to charge with vices which ought not even to be named!

But it is needless to enlarge. Our daily observation, reading and reflection, will suggest illustrations. Opportunities without number, for the exercise of this sympathy, are continually before us. We need not go beyond the sea, nor to places unfamiliar. Around us and among us there are those whose lighter or more serious ills call for a brother's love. But if there be some one evil of such transcendent magnitude that all others, in comparison with it, are as nothing, then our minds naturally turn to this, with the most concern, and direct towards the removal of this our most earnest efforts. There is such an evil, and hence I observe:—

III. The practical acknowledgment of human brotherhood will impel us to *seek the salvation of all men*. It is the most affecting thought in connection with the truth we are considering, that we are all *brethren in guilt*; that the whole family of man are apostate from God, and that Jesus Christ came to save the lost. We speak not now of specific crimes, in which there are various degrees, and from which some may regard themselves as entirely free; but of that common depravity which is the root of all outward crimes, the source of all human misery, and which exposes the whole human race to the wrath of God forever.

This is a far more dreadful thing than any specific crime; for it is the source of them all. It is *out of this* that evil thoughts, adulteries, murders do proceed. This is the very *essence* of murder, for it is "enmity against God." In this respect no man can say to another, "I am holier than thou," for by nature all are opposed alike to God; we *hated Him without a cause*. All men are thus involved in a common ruin; we are exposed to a common danger, from which Christ offers to us a common salvation. To this point converges all our interest in our fellow men, all our sympathy in their behalf. We grieve for other evils; but there is no evil that can be compared with sin. We rejoice in the good of others, but no earthly good can be compared with salvation.

If our brother be a Christian, then all he may suffer here is infinitely outweighed by the glory he shall receive hereafter. Present affliction is light, and but for a moment; and we know that all things work together for his good. But if he fail of salvation, then all things work for evil; the blessings God bestows upon him are turned into a curse; the pleasures of a sinful life will increase the pains of eternal death. It were better for that man if he had never been born.

And when we look around and see many of our own acquaintance destitute of that which alone makes life worth the having; when we see a vast majority, in nominally Christian lands, rejecting the only Name under heaven whereby they can be saved; when a majority of the human race have never heard even the name of our Redeemer;—when we consider these things, and remember that all are of one blood with us, shall we not be *moved* to seek their salvation? If we regard all men as-brethren, shall we not feel as Paul did—“*debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and unwise;*” and like him seek to make known the gospel to all men, as we have opportunity?

We shall desire that all of the human family, whether high or low, refined or rude, bond or free, may belong to that other family where these distinctions are unknown—that family whose members are not merely *of one blood*, but all are *one* in Christ Jesus.

Thus we see that the practical acknowledgment of the truth taught in the text, will make every human being an object of interest to us, and thus make us thoughtful; will lead us to rejoice in the joy of others and sorrow in their grief; and above all, will impel us to seek the salvation of all men, without regard to their outward condition. It will put us on a higher platform in regard to all that concerns humanity. We shall look at men more as God looks at them; and all those artificial distinctions which now seem so important, all those vanities of fashion which now take up so much of our time and so much distract our attention from worthier objects—all these will appear to us, as they are, vanity and vexation of spirit. Leaving the maxims of this world, we shall learn to act on higher principles. Viewing all men as our brethren, we shall have a constant source of sorrow in the wickedness of some, continual joy in those who repent and are saved; and thus shall we realize the Christian paradox—rejoicing as not rejoicing, weeping as though they wept not. Thus, too, shall we show the truth of that saying, “he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

And now, my hearers, I entreat you to apply this subject, with all seriousness and candor, to your own heart and life. Alone with the Searcher of hearts, recall your past history. and ask yourself whether you have lived as this doctrine requires.

However that question may be answered, I entreat you NOW, from this time forth to accept this truth from the word of God; to acknowledge it heartily, and make it the principle of your daily conduct. Rise above the selfishness which actuates worldly men, and imitate Him who became a partaker of flesh and blood that He might bring many sons into glory. Observe how He was not ashamed to call them brethren—even the ignorant, the despised, the vicious; He ate with publicans and sinners; He said even to the adulteress, “Go, and sin no more.” Let the same mind be in you that was in Him. Put away all pride, envy and evil speaking. Let no word go forth from your lips, let no thought enter your heart, concerning any man, which would be unbecoming in children of one family. And not only so, but strive to *do* all that is required by the second great commandment of the law. Let your soul weep, as Christ wept over Jerusalem, for a world lying in wickedness. Let the thought that so many of your own blood are enemies of God *move* you to seek their reconciliation; let it *constrain* you to *know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*



## SERMON II.

# THE CURSE OF MEROZ.

Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.—*Judges 5: 23.*

The “Angel of the Lord” here mentioned is supposed to be the same that appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, to whom he made intercession in behalf of Sodom: the same that appeared to Joshua, by Jericho, saying, “as Captain of the host of the Lord am I come:” none other than the eternal Son of God, by whom the worlds were made, by whom the church was so often delivered from affliction in ancient times, who afterwards became incarnate and dwelt for a season among men, that by the suffering of death he might become the Captain of salvation to all who believe. *He* it was who led Israel in the conquest of Canaan, who led them at different times against their oppressors, and now had delivered them from Jabin, king of Canaan. He inspired Deborah, the prophetess, who stirred up Barak to go forth to battle against Sisera, and then He gave the victory. For we read that “the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak.” And accordingly Deborah commences the song of triumph with “Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.” But while it was the divine Leader that gained the victory, He chose to do it through the agency of the people themselves; and it is spoken to the praise of the people and the governors that they “willingly offered themselves” for this service. Twenty years of severe oppression would seem sufficient to bring the people to repentance, and make them willing to obey the voice of God when it called them to rise and throw off the yoke. Yet the inhabitants of Meroz, for some reason or other, were not willing to do this; and a bitter curse was denounced against them in consequence. It does not appear that they joined the enemy or wished success to his cause; but they are condemned for *not doing their duty*, “because they *came not* to the help of the Lord, to the help

of Jehovah against the mighty." It was not because God had need of human help to overcome Sisera with his nine hundred chariots of iron, but because he was pleased to use human instrumentality, and they refused to act; it was because they remained at home when God called them forth to the battle, that the angel of the Lord denounced a curse upon them.

Since all these things happened *for examples*, and are recorded *for our learning*, the question is suggested, whether, and in what way, we may bring upon ourselves the curse of Meroz; and in what way we may avoid it. In the first place, as is naturally suggested by our national emergency, let us inquire whether we may not commit the sin and incur the punishment of the inhabitants of Meroz, by *failing to discharge our duty as citizens*; by lack of service to our country. It is to be observed that the commonwealth of Israel was in some respects different from our own; inasmuch as that people at that time constituted the visible church; and God took the lead in its affairs, both civil and religious, in a different manner from what is seen at the present day. God revealed His will by the mouth of prophets, and he that refused to obey the voice of the prophet was accounted disobedient to God. In the instance before us God spake by the prophetess Deborah, calling to the people to rise and throw off the yoke of Jabin; and when Barak and his ten thousand men had gone up to Mt. Tabor, and Sisera had marshaled all his forces with his nine hundred chariots of iron, then the word came to Barak, "Up, for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand; is not the Lord gone out before thee?" And so the curse was pronounced on Meroz, "because they came not to the help of the Lord." But while this nation does not stand in the same relations to God that Israel did; while no prophet's voice declares to us the divine will in our particular circumstances, we may find abundant analogy between our own situation and that of the children of Israel, abundant occasion to take warning from the text. We have the divine will made known to us in the Holy Scriptures with sufficient plainness for our guidance; and if we do not obey the voice that speaks in the written word, we are just as guilty as those who disobeyed the voice of the living prophet. If the Bible shows it to be our duty to go out to battle against the enemies of our country, it is as wicked for us to remain at home as for the inhabitants of Meroz when called to the same work. If God reveals to us His will that we should

do such and such things, the manner of the revelation does not affect our duty. His commands are equally binding, whether they are delivered to us orally by an inspired messenger, or written in a book and handed down two or four thousand years. We are therefore bound to inquire what is our duty, as made known in the Scriptures; and having ascertained this, to act accordingly. What does God call us to do in the particular circumstances in which our country is placed? How may we come to the "help of the Lord" in this crisis of our country's history? Observe, the inquiry is not what measures are expedient in order to secure certain results; it is not concerning political, or social, or financial theories; for such themes belong not to the pulpit; but it is a question of *duty to God*. There are certain duties connected with each of the relations in which we are placed; and not to perform our duty as citizens is just as really *sin* as for a child not to honor his father and his mother. And here is suggested the principle which lies at the foundation, to-wit: that *civil government is ordained of God*. We are not merely placed *by divine Providence* in this relation of citizens to our government; but this relation is one which He approves, one which He has instituted for our good.

We do not find in the Bible any distinct account of the first organization of civil government, any primitive revelation by which it was established among men. But in the course of Biblical history we find it existing as matter of fact, and its authority recognized as matter of principle. Not to dwell on the Old Testament, where the authority of patriarchs and kings is constantly recognized, we find our Saviour answering the Scribes, "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's," implying that God would have men obey the civil ruler; and the apostles, especially Paul and Peter, are very full and clear on this point. In Romans, XIII, Paul enjoins subjection to the "powers that be," not only because disobedience would bring punishment, but also for conscience sake, because God commands it. Again, he exhorts Titus: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." And Peter, to the same purpose, writes, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto those that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of

foolish men." It may perhaps be urged that this passage does not prove the divine authority of government; but that only for certain reasons, which we need not inquire into, God saw fit to require this of his people; that while government is not a divine institution, it is best to submit to it during the short time we sojourn here below. But I think every plain reader of the passage will understand that it is God's will not only that the powers should be obeyed, but that there should *be* powers. Government seems to be recognized as a good thing, one which God himself ordains; so that, as Paul says, the magistrate is the "minister of God." Obedience to the civil authority is spoken of as "well doing," as though that were an acknowledged duty. But it is possible, (and it often happened in those times,) that rulers should command what is wrong — what God forbids: are they then "ministers of God?" It is to be observed, in answer to this question, that the precepts just quoted are not conditioned on the character of the rulers. It is not said that righteous government is a divine institution; that the just magistrate is a minister of God, as some appear to understand it. But the doctrine is that civil government, as such, is ordained of God; that magistrates, as such, are God's ministers. And we are not excused from obedience because those who are set over us are not what they ought to be. Yet when they require what God forbids, or forbid what He requires, our duty is plain. We ought to obey God rather than man, and suffer patiently the evils that wicked rulers inflict upon us; knowing that a special blessing is pronounced on those who suffer for righteousness sake.

But is there no "right of revolution?" May not the people of a state overthrow the "powers that be" and establish better, when they think it can be done to advantage? This "right of revolution" I think exists only in connection with a *duty* to revolutionize? People have a *right* to change their rulers or form of government by violence only when God makes it their *duty* to do so. "The powers that be are ordained of God," and those who seek to overturn an existing government must be sure that God calls them to this work. The "burden of proof," as logicians say, rests upon them; and they should not begin a revolution till they are clear, not only that the Government has been badly administered and is susceptible of improvement, but that the word and providence of God plainly call *them* to interfere and as God's ministers establish a better government, or install a more upright ad-



ministration. Thus: When the Children of Israel were in Egypt, it was their duty to submit to the Egyptian monarch till God called them to go up to the promised land. When God sold them, for their sins, into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, though he "mightily oppressed them," they might still think it their duty to submit, and accept this oppression as the punishment of their sins. But when God called them to return to his service and throw off the oppressor's yoke, the inhabitants of Meroz were false to their duty because they did not obey. Then Barak, and not Sisera, was the minister of God to them.

When God gave the Jews, as well as other nations, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, it was their duty to serve him with fidelity; and when Hananiah falsely prophesied that within two years God would break the yoke of the king of Babylon, and thus endeavored to excite the Jews to resist him, God sent Jeremiah to the false prophet saying, "Behold, I will cast thee off from the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord."

To bring this instruction, now, to our own case. The government of these United States is one of the "powers that be" in the earth. We need not inquire by what reasons our fathers were justified in commencing their revolution. That revolution is justified by the event, so far as our duty at present is concerned. The government is established, and for a long period has proved eminently beneficial. There have been faults of administration, but apart from these the government has been as good as we could desire, and these perhaps have been as few, and slight as in any other government on earth. But a rebellion has broken out even here. A large portion of the people seek to be absolved from their allegiance to this government, and to establish another according to their liking. The rest are called upon to aid the government in putting down rebellion, and restoring its authority throughout the whole country. In view of what has been said, our duty is most plain: we should render to our government that honor, that obedience, that cheerful service which are due to an ordinance of God. We should regard our constituted rulers as ministers of God to us, and render honor to whom honor is due. Thus in general; but what particular things are now required of us, by reason of the present exigency? I answer:

I. *We should willingly offer ourselves to aid in sustaining the government.* We should *come* to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

The curse of Meroz may rest upon us if we fail. The heritage of our fathers may become a desolation, New England may become a howling wilderness, if we fail. Every man and woman, and every child who can understand; all persons who enjoy the blessings which God gives us through our national government, should freely contribute what service they may to sustain that government; and they should do this as a matter of duty to God.

Of course all cannot contribute in the same manner, nor in equal degree; but each should be willing to do what he can. And here, as in other cases, "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Let there be first an intelligent, conscientious loyalty; a genuine, hearty patriotism; and then let our offerings be presented according to our several ability.

II. *Some must go forth to the battle.* Barak was directed to take ten thousand men with him when he went to fight against Sisera. These were all that were needed; unless others might join them afterwards to pursue the fleeing Canaanites. Those who willingly offered themselves were highly commended, and if more had been ready, their will should have been taken for the deed. But if any refused to go, were unwilling to bear their part of the danger and hardship, did not recognize the call of God; if even those whose services were not needed in the field had possessed this spirit; upon all such fell the curse; "Curse ye Meroz," &c. Our chief magistrate has called for soldiers. Somebody must respond. Some must leave home and friends for the privations of the camp, the fatigues of the march, and the perils of the field. Whose duty is it to go? All are not needed, but I think that every man who is qualified for the service, should seriously ask himself the question: 'Is it not my duty to go?' and should decide the question on other grounds than the fear of personal danger, or the certain prospect of personal inconvenience. This is not the time nor the place to discuss the reasons for deciding one way or the other, but one to insist on the duty of *deciding the question* intelligently, conscientiously, and without partiality.

III. We should all strive to aid in sustaining our government by *speaking the truth in love*. In this way every one may contribute something towards the salvation of the country, and should be willing to contribute this, though it may appear as insignificant as the two mites which a certain poor widow cast into the treasury. And if all would do this, the aggregate influence would be exceeding great. We should

speaking the truth in regard to *principles*. In this country public opinion has great influence upon the conduct of men in office; and their conduct will have great influence upon the issue of the war.

It is highly important, therefore, that public opinion should be correct; and every one should contribute what he can to that end. I have sometimes feared that our rulers are influenced too much by public opinion, and do not, as they ought, practically acknowledge that their power is from God and not from the people. But this only makes it the more necessary that right sentiment should prevail among those whose votes elect rulers, and whose voice so greatly influences them. We should study to speak the truth in regard to the divine authority of government, the nature of our civil institutions, the distinction between the administration and the government, and the possible necessity of censuring the one in order to remain loyal to the other, the teachings of the Bible concerning slavery,—which subject has so much to do with our national affairs; in regard to these, and all such like matters, we should be careful to speak the truth, and endeavor to have the truth prevail.

Again, we should speak the truth in regard to *men*. All the misrepresentation of the sentiments or conduct of people in public or private stations, which is so common in partisan times, is as unpatriotic as it is wicked. It is nothing less than a breach of the ninth commandment, and its evil influence is not difficult to trace. Yet once more, in regard to *things* and *events*, we should be careful to speak the truth. We should not try to persuade others or ourselves that things are in any respect otherwise than they really are. While we should not borrow trouble, nor be easily discouraged, but cherish always a cheerful hope and a lively faith, it is no part of a patriot's duty to cry 'peace' when there is no peace, to call a defeat a victory, to scout unpleasant possibilities, and abuse those who give faithful warnings of danger. But while in all things we speak the truth, let us never forget that *the truth* should be spoken *in love*. There would be much to say under this head, but I must leave it with these hints, and pass to observe—

IV. Finally, that *we should all pray for our country*. Here is a weapon that all can use; the aged, and those whose infirmities keep them from the field; the women and children may all by their prayers help to sustain our government in this trying hour. But how can they pray who still continue impenitent? They may desire and wish and long for the restoration of peace and union; but can they truly *pray* for it while strangers to God? Yet nothing can be plainer than this: that

those who wish to *honor God* by sustaining the government which He has given us, will pray for His blessing, without which fleets and armies would be of no avail. My hearer! *do you pray?* If not, are you not in danger of the curse of Meroz? Are you not refusing to come to the help of the Lord? Are not you in a state of rebellion against your Maker? refusing to return to your allegiance, and be reconciled to God? If you condemn those in rebellion against our government, how much severer condemnation do you bring against yourself!



## SERMON III.

# CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT

*I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.*—PHIL. 4-11.

In the preceding verse the apostle expresses his great joy that the Philippians' care of him had "flourished again;" that they had shown their love for him, and for his Master by contributing again to the supply of his wants while he was a prisoner at Rome. But lest he should seem to be thinking of himself; lest his commendation of their liberality should be construed as a complaint of his own privations; he goes on to say: "Not that I speak in respect of want;"—his joy was not so much on his own account, because his own comfort would be increased;—"for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." So it was for their sake more than his own that he rejoiced at their liberality; because it showed they had the true Christian spirit, and would secure for them the rewards of well-doing in the future world; as he says just after: "Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Hunger and thirst and privation were no more agreeable to Paul than to other men; but he had learned to bear all these things patiently and cheerfully for the sake of greater good. He saw something better to live for than eating and drinking; better than worldly pleasures or the applause of men; better even than personal liberty and the 'pursuit of happiness.' Paul enjoyed as well as other men the good things of this world. He taught that 'every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, but received with thanksgiving.' But he did not live *for* these things; his life did not consist in the enjoyment of them. The 'mark' to which he aimed was above and beyond them all. He had a work to do in this world; and while doing it had need of food and raiment. He taught that 'having these he ought to be content.' And he had learned to be content; though his share of these necessary things was sometimes scanty, and he suffered from cold and hunger. He had learned to be content in whatsoever state he was; for

he knew that he should have at least the *necessaries* of life, so long as God had a work for him to do on earth ; and when his work was done he was content to die—to die by starvation or by freezing, if that should be the ordering of Providence ; or by the axe of the executioner, if it was by that death he should glorify God.

Observe, the apostle says he *had learned* this. It was not natural to him, any more than it is to us. For our first parents were not content with their condition in Eden ; and since the fall we are by nature prone to be discontented. There is some difference in the dispositions of different persons, in this as in other respects ; but this difference is only of degree. In every case contentment—such as the apostle illustrated and taught—is something to be learned. And Paul tells us where he learned this most excellent but most difficult lesson. It was not in the school of the heathen philosophers, or the Jewish doctors, but in the school of Christ.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” It was not his own peculiarly happy disposition ; nor the strength of his own will ; nor any merely human education ; but the teaching of Christ, the example of Christ, and the indwelling spirit of Christ, that enabled him to stand in his lot, do his appointed work and bear his appointed griefs, *a contented man*.

And Paul had learned this lesson *thoroughly*. “I have learned *in whatsoever state I am—to be content*.” Some persons appear contented enough when they have things pretty much to their minds ; but when matters turn out contrary to their expectations and wishes ; when they are overtaken by some calamity or called to endure some real hardship, in body, mind, or estate, and sometimes when the hardship is only imaginary ; then they show that they have not learned Paul’s lesson of contentment. He said to the Hebrews, (13-5) “be content with *such things as ye have*”—not ‘be content when you have all that you desire.’ We cannot expect to have all things just as we could wish in this life ; for if every wish were gratified where would be any room for the grace of contentment ?

And here it is in place to observe that being *content* in one’s present condition does not mean that he should be *satisfied* with it. For the christian expects to be *satisfied* only when he shall ‘awake’ with the likeness of his God. Nor does contentment imply *indifference* to the evils and inconveniences that one may bear. A man may be poor ; or sick, or lame ; be shut out from many privileges which are open to others, and which he would gladly enjoy ; have his name cast out as evil,

and be abhorred by his own kindred ; and though it is hard to endure poverty and pain ; though he longs for privileges he cannot now enjoy, and feels keenly the word, the look, the action which shows that he is unpopular—or worse, yet he may in all these show a complete example of christian contentment. Was not this the case with Paul? He could say “of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice have I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Yet, though he was “in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft,” he had learned to be content in whatsoever state he was. It is not that these things are less evil to the contented man, but they are more easily borne ; instead of driving him to despair, or leading him to deny the faith, they tend to make him more humble and more trustful, to wean him from the world and fit him for heaven.

Again : contentment does not imply that one should not seek to better his condition. The poor man may be content with his lot, while he strives to increase his wealth. The sick man may be content while using all possible means of recovery. The prisoner may be content while he clearly proves his innocence, and endeavors to obtain justice. Those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely, may be content, while they strive by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Christian contentment must not be confounded with apathy, sluggishness or meanness of spirit, for it is wholly unlike them. It is a heavenly grace, and must be ‘learned ;’ while they are natural to the depraved heart of man. It does not teach that all things are indifferent, and that one condition is not to be preferred to another ; but it teaches us to accept that condition which Providence appoints, and to believe that, however disagreeable it may be, however earnestly we may pray and labor to be delivered from it, yet *for the present* it is good for us to be in it—possibly for the very sake of stimulating our efforts to secure a better condition. Though our circumstances be far different from what we could wish ; nay, though they be very unpleasant or distressing, yet contentment reminds us that all things are ordered by infinite wisdom, and that here Providence has set us some particular lesson, by the learning of which we may be prepared for other and higher conditions, even as a child at school who has mastered the alphabet advances to



spelling and reading, and when he has learned to read begins to study the sciences, and so on. Contentment is a *home-like* virtue. It affords to the mind a quiet rest, like a comfortable *home*, when otherwise it would be violently tossed upon the sea of life, or driven upon the rocks. Herein is seen the great advantage of having learned to be content in whatever state we are. It not only gives the mind needful rest, and freedom from the many evils of discontent; but it enables its possessor to *improve the present time*. The present is the only time we have. Yesterday is gone; to-morrow is not yet come. "*Now* is the accepted time," not merely in the matter of salvation, but for all the work and warfare of this life. Anything therefore which enables us wisely to improve the present time must be of very great advantage in respect to the end of our existence. Our life-work is not likely to be well done, unless we do the work of each day and hour as it passes. But a person who is discontented wastes the golden present in vain regrets, in useless complainings, in idle longings for something other and different, which, if it should come might find him and leave him in the same discontented mood. Here is a youth studying the elements of mathematical science. He complains that his lessons are dry and uninteresting, and cannot bear to study them thoroughly as he ought. He wishes that he were farther advanced—thinks he will by-and-by be more faithful, when the subject of his studies becomes more interesting! How long will he have to study mathematics in this way before he will become interested in the study? So it is with the lessons of God's providence. If we failed to learn the lesson of yesterday, we are unprepared for the lesson of to-day; and if we neglect to-day's lesson; we shall be still worse for to-morrows. We must begin sometime at the beginning, or we can no more build a character than a man could build a house-without laying a foundation. We must start from where we stand, or we shall never make progress. We must take things as they are, in order to make them better.

If I may so speak, God has made this world and governs it, *on mathematical principles*; so that he who disdains elementary truths and elementary duties can never make high attainments in wisdom and virtue. Therefore one of the first things we ought to learn, if we would make the most of ourselves, is that lesson of Paul's, in whatever state we are, *to be content*; to bear patiently and kindly the evils of that state, and cheerfully perform its duties, however humble they



may be; however cross to our proud nature; however difficult and impossible to our unaided strength. I say, if any one would *make the most of himself*, he should learn this lesson of Christian Contentment. And certainly every one should try to make the most of himself; try to educate his powers of body, mind and heart in the best way and to the highest degree—in a word, try to be as good a man as possible in every respect. He should do this, not indeed for his own selfish gratification, (which would make the attainment impossible,) but for the honor of his Creator and Redeemer. For we are not our own. We are *creatures*; and the Lord who made us, “made all things *for himself*.” It is therefore fit that we should strive to answer fully the end for which we were made, being wholly conformed to the will of our Creator. But again, we are not our own, for “we are bought with a price.” We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot, and should we not henceforth live for Him who died for us?

Let it be settled, then, both from the reason of the thing and from positive Scripture precept, that it is every person’s *duty* to learn the apostle’s lesson of contentment. It cannot be learned in an hour, or a week; but by resolute attention to duty, with humble reliance on the Holy Spirit which is promised, we may soon make such degrees of progress as will show us the excellence of the attainment and encourage us to persevere. But the question will arise, “*How shall I learn, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content?*”

In answer to this inquiry, I would say:

1. BELIEVE IN GOD. “*Believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” But does not everybody believe in God? Alas! from the expressions of discontent that we often hear, even from the lips of professed christians, we might infer that they doubted even the existence of God. At least they seem to doubt that He is a *rewarder* of them that seek Him. For if there is such a being as we call *God*, and such as we *must* “call God, and know no more;” if there is a Being who is self-existent, independent, eternal, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness; an infinite Being who is “the same yesterday, to-day and forever,” possessed of every perfection, including the attributes of mercy and grace; a Being upon whom all other beings depend—since he created them at first, and sustains them continually, upholding all things by the word of his power;

who controls all creatures and events from the greatest to the least, in accordance with infinite wisdom and love: who says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," and whose word is pledged that 'all things shall work together for good to them that love Him;' if there is such a being as *God*—not a God of sensual Pagan idolaters, or of sentimental idolaters who call themselves Christians; but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a just God and a Savior—if there is such a Being, who orders all our circumstances, who offers us His friendship, and is willing to give all the help we need; *if God is*, why should we ever be discontented with our lot? If we *believe* "in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," why should we not, as dutiful children, accept what He shall appoint to us each day, and be *content* with that measure and mixture of good and evil that He sends?

2. BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. When the blessed Savior said to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled," he added—as directing them how they might do it—"Believe in God," (or, as our translation has it, 'Ye believe in God,') "*believe also in me.*" See how this faith wrought contentment in the heart of the apostle. He *believed* in Jesus Christ, that same Jesus whose followers he had been persecuting even to death; who was in the beginning with God, but who humbled himself to become man—to take on him the form of a servant and become obedient unto death, out of love and pity for the souls of men. Paul *believed* in Christ, and henceforth he counted no sacrifice too great to be cheerfully made for Him, who—as he so well puts it—"who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."

If it is indeed true that Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and did and suffered all that is recorded of Him in the gospel; if He has indeed purchased complete redemption and everlasting blessedness for all who receive him, and has promised his presence and blessing all through the journey of this life; it would seem to be sufficient to keep them from discontent. Paul *believed* this. He trusted in Jesus as *his* Savior and his Lord, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, who had borne the cross for him, and for whom he counted it joy to bear the cross. He knew that he could not suffer more than Christ had suffered—could not be subjected to greater humiliation than his master had been; and he thought it "enough for

the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his Lord." If we *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, as Paul did, shall we not, like him, learn to be *content* in whatsoever state we are ?

3. BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST. When Jesus left his disciples in the cold, hostile world—as sheep among wolves—he promised them a Comforter until he should return and take them to himself. This Comforter is the Holy Ghost, whose mission it is to convince the unbelieving world of sin and to comfort the hearts of believers in all their trials, sustain them in the hour of temptation, and lead them in the way of truth. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit, not only for renewing grace, by which we enter upon the Christian life, but for sanctifying grace, by which alone we can make any progress therein. It is the Spirit's office to work in us all the Christian graces ; and if we would have those graces abound in us we must truly *believe in the Holy Ghost*. There would be much to say under this head ; for I think the Holy Spirit is too often grieved and dishonored—too often almost forgotten in practice, by those who nevertheless acknowledge the truth in respect to His divine person and work ; but I leave with this hint, and pass on to say,

4. BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. When Paul writes to the Hebrews, "be content with such things as ye have," he adds, "for he hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Here he lays down a solid foundation for christian contentment, viz : *faith in the word of God*. There are exceeding great and precious promises, there are important and precious doctrines ; especially the doctrine of divine providence, and there are precious histories of that providence, all of which are suited to produce the *contentment* of which we speak. But we must *believe* this word, else it will not avail to produce in us its proper fruits. When God says he will never leave or forsake us, we must *believe*. When he says : Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," we must *believe*. When we read the words of our Savior : "Take no thought (i. e. no anxious thought—care) saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or where withal shall we be clothed, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and *all these things shall be added unto you*," we must *believe*. When we read our Lord's gracious promise, "Whatsoever he shall ask

the Father in my name, he will give it you," we must *believe*, and as little children bring all our wants to the mercy seat,—coming with humble boldness in the name of our great High Priest, fully assured that he is able and willing to give us all we need, *confident* that we shall have the very things we ask for, or something better.

It was this faith that sustained George Neumark, and taught him to sing this hymn for the church of Christ :

Leave God to order all thy ways,  
And hope in Him what'er betide ;  
Thou'lt find Him in the evil days  
An all-sufficient strength and guide.  
*Who trusts in God's unchanging love,  
Builds on the rock that naught can move.*

What can these anxious eares avail,  
These never ceasing moans and sighs ?  
What can it help us to bewail  
Each painful moment as it flies ?  
Our cross and trials do but press  
The heavier for our bitterness.

Only your restless heart keep still ;  
And wait in cheerful hope, content  
To take what'er his gracious will  
His all-discerning love hath sent ;  
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known  
To him who chose us for his own.

He knows when joyful hours are best,  
He sends them as he sees it meet ;  
When thou hast borne its fiery test,  
And now art freed from all deceit,  
He comes to thee all unaware  
And makes thee own his loving care.

Nor in the heat of pain and strife,  
Think God hath cast thee off unheard ;  
Nor that the man whose prosperous life  
Thou enviest is of him preferred ;  
Time passes, and much change doth bring,  
And sets a bound to everything.

All are alike before his face ;  
'Tis easy to our God most high.  
To make the rich man poor and base,  
To give the poor man wealth and joy.  
True wonders still of him are wrought,  
Who setteth up and brings to naught.

Sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways,  
But do thine own part faithfully.  
Trust His rich promises of grace,  
So shall it be fulfilled in thee :  
*God never yet forsook at need  
The soul that trusted him indeed.*